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ABSTRACT

A summary of a conference session addresses issues involved in determining and evaluating competencies in teachers of visually handicapped children. Four papers are presented on the implications of a project initiated in 1978 at the University of Michigan that established 70 teacher competency statements in 10 goal areas. The first paper, "Competencies of Teachers as Perceived by Administrators," by I. Holman, examined the views of four groups of administrators: primary administrators of residential schools, state education consultants, supervisors of large programs, and leadership personnel of the instructional resource centers for the visually handicapped. It is reported that the administrators generally agreed on the relevance and need for the competencies. In "Issues and Problems in the Assessment of Competencies," G. Scholl focuses on project efforts to deal with three main assessment problems: the degree of specificity required, need for objective and reliable measures, and identification and assessment of the affective component. Two concluding papers ("Use of Competencies to Improve Preservice Education" by M. Ward and "Use of Competencies to Plan Inservice Programs" by J. Stager) consider applications of the teacher competencies and provide reactions to the first two papers. (CL)

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Competencies of Teachers of the Visually Handicapped: Progress Report

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Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the
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Competencies of Teachers of the Visually Handicapped:

Progress Report

Introduction

Ida Jean Holman, Texas
Geraldine T. Scholl, Michigan

In recent years there has been increasing concern about the quality of instruction in educational programs provided for pupils enrolled in our nation's schools. A related concern, and one of similar proportions, is the questioning, especially in the popular press, of the competency of teachers working in the classrooms. State teacher certification requirements attest to completion of a specified teacher education program in a college or university but provide no guarantee of competence.

In an attempt to deal with the problem, increasing numbers of states are turning to some kind of competency examination, either the National Teacher Examination or one prepared specifically for that state. A few states are attempting to develop competency based certification programs. Unfortunately, many of the competencies identified for this purpose as well as the mastery tasks/achievement indicators for assessing the competencies have limited validity and reliability. They often bear little relationship to actual classroom performance and thus are poor predictors of future success as a teacher.

Interest in performance or competency based teacher education (CBTE) increased during the 1970s, when the supply of teachers began to exceed the demand. Administrators could, after several decades of a teacher shortage, choose from among many candidates. However, criteria for making an informed selection remain elusive. Meeting state certification requirements provides little or no guarantee of ability to perform in the classroom. Thus competency based teacher education programs gained in popularity and were viewed as a solution to the problem of selecting teachers who would be competent in the classroom.

CBTE has two major problems: lack of consensus on a definition of the competencies and lack of measurable criteria for assessing the competencies. Among educators there is little agreement about what behaviors constitute an

effective teacher. Teachers and pupils in a mobile society frequently change geographical location and each setting has a different set of expectations for teachers. In addition, school districts as well as pupils vary in their demographic characteristics making agreement on a uniform set of teacher competencies difficult to achieve.

The problem of assessment presents an additional challenge and requires a balance between subjective/objective and specific/global procedures for rating the competency. Our current project and its predecessor (Spungin, 1977) have attempted to address these problems in our field.

In 1973 the American Foundation for the Blind initiated a series of meetings with representatives of the colleges and universities preparing teachers of the visually handicapped with the goal of defining competencies for those teachers. These sessions culminated with the identification of 82 competency statements arranged in twelve goal areas reflecting seven teaching activities: assessment and evaluation, educational instructiona strategies, guidance and counseling, administration and supervision, media and technology, school-community relations, and research.

The resulting document was field tested with 1,933 teachers actually working in residential and day schools. Responses were received from 807, for a response rate of 41%. Results from the study substantiated the observation concerning the varying roles that teachers perform in their individual settings and that some of the competencies deemed important by teacher educators were not viewed as such by teachers actually working with visually handicapped pupils (Spungin, 1978).

In 1978 the University of Michigan initiated a project designed to further refine and validate the competencies and to develop mastery tasks or achievement indicators. The first phase of the project, a review and revision by faculty and doctoral students at 12 colleges and universities, resulted in a reduction of the goal areas to 10 with 70 competency statements encompassing both knowledge and skill components. These ten goal areas are as follows:

1.0 Teacher demonstrates knowledge of developmental patterns in visually handicapped learners (Developmental Patterns)
2.0 Teacher will demonstrate the ability to assess visually handicapped learners using a variety of informal and formal procedures (Assessment)

3.0 Teacher will demonstrate the ability to select, design and/or modify specialized curricula for visually handicapped learners with varying degrees of visual impairment and at all developmental levels (Specialized Curriculum)

4.0 Teacher will demonstrate proficiency in the operation of media and devices necessary for the education of the visually handicapped learner (Media and Devices)

5.0 Teacher will utilize instructional strategies to facilitate learning in visually handicapped learners (Instructional Strategies)

6.0 Teacher can effectively utilize instructional materials, media, devices, etc. appropriate to the individual needs of visually handicapped learners (Use of Media)

7.0 Teacher will demonstrate ability to identify and provide appropriate counseling and guidance services to visually handicapped learners and significant others (Counseling and Guidance)

8.0 Teacher will demonstrate ability to utilize local, state, and national legislation, policy, and resources to assist in the delivery of services to the visually handicapped learner (Resources)

9.0 Teacher will demonstrate knowledge of and need for research with visually handicapped learners (Research)

10.0 Teacher will accept responsibilities of being a member of the teaching profession and will make a commitment to improve services for visually handicapped learners with varying degrees of visual loss and at all developmental levels (Professionalism)

This document furnished the base for our progress reports presented during subsequent conventions of the Council for Exceptional Children (Holman and Scholl, 1981; Scholl, et al., 1982). This session continues these reports.

The session is divided into two major parts. During the first part, two papers are presented. "Competencies of Teachers as Perceived by Administrators" summarizes the research undertaken to validate the competencies with another group, namely, administrators. This paper adds to the validation data collected earlier from teachers and college/university personnel. The second paper, "Issues and Problems in Assessment of Competencies," describes attempts at the development of mastery tasks/achievement indicators to be used in the assessment of the competencies. During

the second part, two reactors will discuss the "Use of the Competencies to Improve Preservice Preparation" and "Use of the Competencies to Plan Inservice Programs."

References

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Spungin, S. J. Competency-based curriculum for teachers of the visually handicapped: A national study. New York: American Foundation for the Blind, 1977.

Spungin, S. J. Competency-based curriculum: A national survey of teachers. Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness. May 1978, 163-9.

Competencies of Teachers as Perceived by Administrators

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Design

This study utilized a survey research design to obtain responses from four groups of administrators who work with teachers of the visually handicapped. The groups consisted of the primary administrators of residential schools for the blind/visually handicapped, the state education consultants for the visually handicapped, supervisors of large programs, and the leadership personnel of the instructional resource centers for the visually handicapped. The list of supervisors of the large programs is the least accurate since this is not an organized group. The official lists maintained by the leadership project at the University of

Michigan were used for identifying the subjects in these four groups.

The instrument was designed to be a self-administered mail questionnaire. It consisted of closed questions and scales in two sections. The first section included the ten goal areas and 70 competency statements. The subjects were asked to respond to the goal statements on a five point scale ranging from not necessary to essential for teachers in their particular setting. For each of the competency statements, the respondents were asked to mark the appropriate response ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', whether they considered the competency as a critical component of the goal area. The second section of the questionnaire consisted of eight questions requesting background information about the respondent.

The population included 159 persons, 44 primary administrators of residential schools for the blind/visually handicapped (Residential), 54 State Education Consultants for the Visually Handicapped (SECVH), 40 supervisors of large programs (Supervisors), and 21 from the Instructional Resource Center for the Visually Handicapped (IMC).

The questionnaire was sent to 32 administrators or approximately 20% of the population as a pilot study to obtain feedback on the instrument design. The results of the pilot study indicated that the questionnaire required slight modifications. After the questionnaire had been modified, it was sent to the remainder of the population. The response rate for the pilot study was 69% and 61% for the main study. The return rate for each group was: 59% for residential, 64% for SECVH, 59% for supervisors, and 59% for IMC. The total response rate as well as the response rate for each group fell well within the acceptable range.

The data were recorded and transferred to the computer for analysis. A series of routines was used to analyze the data.

Results and Discussion

The results are reported in five sections: Group Differences and the Ten Goal Statements, Group Differences Towards The Competency Statements Within the Ten Goal Areas, The Competency Statements, Goal Statements and Demographic Information, and Group Differences. The major findings on these five areas are presented below.

Ten Goal Statements

The first section looked at how each of the groups responded to the goal statements. Both descriptive statistics and tests of significance were used in analyzing the data. The descriptive analyses revealed:

1. For seven of the goal statements 54% to 74% of the responses were in the strongly agree (5) choice. (See Table 1).

2. For Goal Statement IX, research, almost 50% of the responses were in the neutral (3) choice.
3. Goal Statements VII, counseling and guidance, and VIII, resources, had the greatest observable differences in responses.

Further analysis utilizing multiple analysis of variance, analysis of variance and t-tests demonstrated:

4. The responses to Goal Statement VIII, resources, were significantly different for the residential group. (See Table 2).

The Competency Statements within The Ten Goal Areas

The second section looked at the responses to the competency statements within each goal area and the responses of each group to the competency statements within a goal area. A series of correlation matrices demonstrated that:

1. Competency statements within the goal areas are closely correlated.

The combined means for each goal area were plotted for the groups of administrators. Goal IV (Media and Devices) had the most similiar responses between groups while Goal V (Instructional Strategies) showed most variation between the group in responses.

2. The combined means of the competency statements when plotted by groups of administrators vary from .15 of a point to 1.4 points. (See Figure 1).

The Competency Statements

The third section examined the kinds of response, the interdependence and correlation among the competency statements, and their possible groupings. (See Tables 3 and

TABLE 1
Comparison of the Goal Areas
by
Groups of Administrators

GROUPS	GOAL AREAS						
	I Development Patterns 5	II Assessment 5	III Specialized Curriculum 5	IV Media & Devices 5	V Instruction Strategies 5	VI Use of Media 5	X Professional 5
IMC	42.9%	50.0%	75.0%	50.0%	62.5%	62.5%	25.0%
SECVH	76.0%	75.0%	75.0%	54.2%	80.0%	64.0%	62.5%
Residential	73.9%	56.5%	60.9%	42.1%	69.6%	65.0%	65.0%
Supervisors	83.3%	88.9%	94.4%	73.3%	72.2%	60.0%	53.3%
N	54	51	56	36	54	43	38
%	74%	69.9%	75.7%	54.5%	73%	63.2%	56.7%

GROUPS	Goal Areas						
	VII Counseling & Guidance			VIII Resources			IX Research
	3	4	5	3	4	5	3
IMC	25%	25%	37.5%	25%	50%	25%	50%
SECVH	8.7%	30.4%	56.5%	25%	29.2%	37.5%	45.8%
Residential	30.0%	20.0%	30.0%	17.4%	17.4%	17.4%	50.0%
Supervisors	6.7%	33.3%	53.3%	22.2%	50.0%	27.8%	46.7%
N	11	18	30	16	24	20	52
%	16.7%	27.3%	45.5%	21.9%	32.9%	27.4%	47.8%

TABLE 2

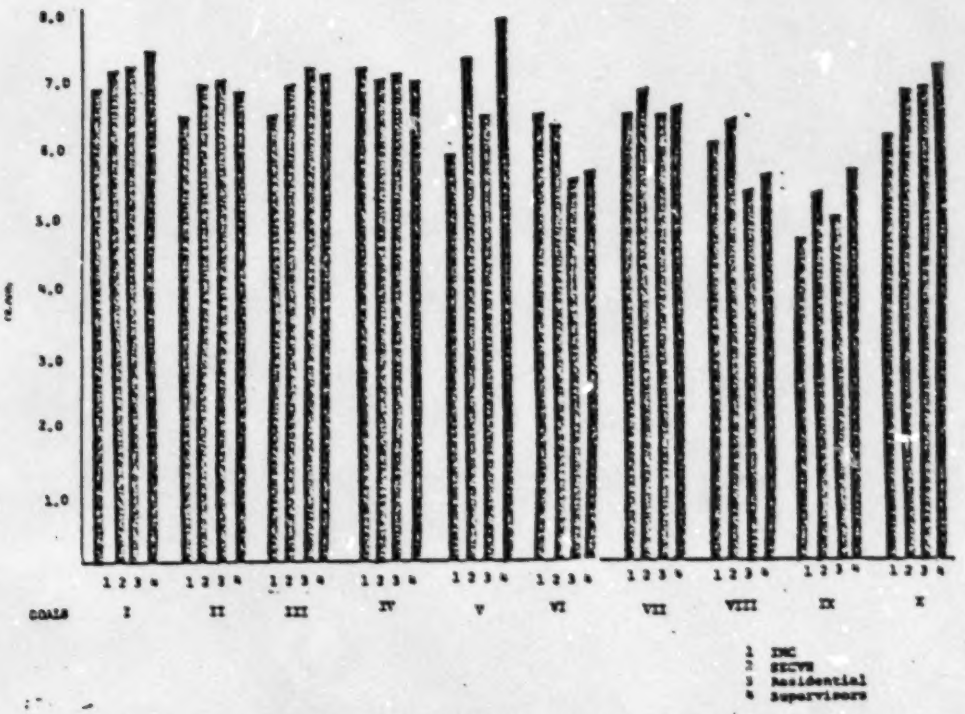
T-test For Goal VIII

Group	N	Group	N	T	Probability
IMC	8	SECVH	24	.20	.84
IMC	8	Residential	23	2.17	.04 *
IMC	8	Supervisors	18	.18	.86
SECVH	24	Residential	23	2.87	.006 **
SECVH	24	Supervisors	18	.46	.64
Residential	23	Supervisors	18	3.28	.002 **

*) $p \leq 0.05$
**) $p \leq 0.01$

Figure 1

Combined Means of the Responses to the Competency Statements
by Goal Area
for Groups of Administrators



4). Some of the major findings were:

1. Over 95% of the responses to the competency statements were in the agree to strongly agree choices.
2. Five statements received 15% or more of their responses in the neutral and negative choices. Three of these statements were in Goal IX.
3. The 70 competency statements are dependent but not equally correlated.

To explore the possible groupings a principal component analysis was attempted; however, due to the large number of competency statements and small number of subjects, it was not mathematically possible. The principal component analysis groups the variables in clusters. Since one principal component analysis was not possible, ten principal component analyses were computed for each goal area and a representative statement was selected from each section. A subsequent principal component analysis utilizing the representative statements was computed. The first component reconfirmed that the administrators viewed the document as a unit rather than ten separate entities as it formed one single group. The second had the following results:

4. The competency statements were divided into two groups with practical skills, the positive, and theoretical skills, the negative.

Goal Statements and Demographic Information

The fourth section looked at the responses to the demographic information and the responses to the ten goal statements to determine if there were any significant differences in responses by age, sex, years of experience, and type of training. (See Tables 5 and 6). Cross tabulation tables, means, standard deviations and percentages resulted in:

1. Observable differences for the sex and age of the respondents for Goals VII, counseling and guidance, VIII, resources, IX, research, and X, professionalism.

When tests of significance were attempted on the data, it was determined:

2. Numbers were too small for reliable analysis.

Demographic Characteristics of the Subjects

The fifth section addressed the differences among the four groups with regard to the demographic information. The

TABLE 3

Frequency and Percentage
of
Responses to Competency Statements

Response Choice	Frequency	Percentage
8 Strongly Agree	2085	42.3%
7	1075	21.9%
6	721	14.6%
5	276	5.6%
4 Agree	558	11.3%
3 Neutral	158	3.2%
2 Disagree	38	.7%
1 Strongly Disagree	12	.2%
TOTAL	4923	100%

TABLE 4

Percentages of Neutral and Negative Responses
by
Competency Statement

Competency Statement	N	PERCENTAGE			TOTAL Percentage
		Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
III-9	67	10.4%	-	-	10.4%
VI-5	67	9.0%	3.0%	-	12.0%
VI-6	67	9.0%	3.0%	-	12.0%
VI-7	67	11.9%	4.5%	3.0%	19.4%
VII-5	73	11.0%	2.7%	1.4%	15.1%
VII-8	73	6.8%	2.7%	2.7%	12.2%
VIII-1	72	13.9%	-	-	13.9%
IX-1	66	4.5%	1.5%	10.6%	16.6%
IX-3	66	18.2%	3.0%	1.5%	22.7%
IX-4	66	12.1%	-	-	12.1%
IX-5	65	26.2%	10.8%	-	37.0%

TABLE 5
Comparison of the Goal Areas
by
Age of Respondent

AGE	GOAL AREAS					
	VII Counseling & Guidance			VIII Resources		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
24-29	-	-	-	-	1.7%	-
30-39	1.9%	1.9%	11.1%	5.0%	3.3%	10.0%
40-49	-	1.9%	1.9%	3.3%	-	10.0%
50-59	-	1.9%	1.9%	-	1.7%	3.3%
60-69	-	-	1.9%	-	1.7%	-
N	1	3	9	5	5	14
%	1.9%	5.6%	16.7%	8.3%	8.3%	23.3%

AGE	GOAL AREAS					
	IX RESEARCH			X PROFESSIONALISM		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
24-29	-	-	1.9%	-	-	-
30-39	11.1%	3.7%	24.1%	3.7%	-	7.4%
40-49	-	1.9%	9.3%	-	1.9%	1.9%
50-59	1.9%	-	9.3%	-	-	3.7%
60-69	-	-	5.6%	-	-	-
N	7	3	27	2	1	7
%	13%	5.6%	50%	3.7%	1.9%	13.%

TABLE 6
Comparison of the Goal Areas
by
Sex of Respondent

SEX	GOAL AREAS					
	VII Counseling & Guidance			VIII Resources		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Male	1.8%	5.5%	10.9%	6.6%	8.2%	.0%
Female	-	-	7.3%	1.6%	-	5.6%
N	1	3	10	5	5	15
%	1.8%	5.5%	18.2%	8.2%	8.2%	24.6%

SEX	GOAL AREAS					
	IX RESEARCH			X PROFESSIONALISM		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Male	9.1%	1.8%	32.7%	-	1.8%	10.9%
Female	3.6%	3.6%	18.2%	3.6%	-	1.8%
N	7	3	28	2	1	7
%	12.7%	5.5%	50.9%	3.6%	1.8%	12.7%

resulting profile of the four group is:

1. The characteristics of the IMC group are:
   a. The youngest of the four groups,
   b. About 67% male,
   c. About 50% with formal V.H. training, and
   d. An average of 4.6 years in their current position.
2. The characteristics of the Supervisors group are:
   a. between the IMC group and the other two groups in age,
   b. about 69% female,
   c. almost all with formal V.H. training, and
   d. an average of 7.4 years in their current position.
3. The characteristics of the SECVH group are:
   a. comparable to the residential group in age,
   b. about 60% male,
   c. about 90% with formal V.H. training, and
   d. an average of 9.8 years in their current position.
4. The characteristics of the residential group are:
   a. comparable to the SECVH group in age,
   b. almost entirely male,
   c. about 95% with formal V.H. training, and
   d. an average of 9.7 years in their current position.

Of the ten goal areas only three received deviant responses. For Goal statements I, II, III, IV, V, VI, and X, the consensus of the administrators was that they were essential and the competency statements on the whole were considered critical components of the competency. Goal statements VII and VIII received mixed responses with a significant difference in the responses of the residential group for Goal VIII.

Goal IX, research, was the one goal that was not rated with a substantial number of responses in the agree and strongly agree choices. Four of the five competency statements that accompanied Goal IX received nuetral and disagree responses. In the Spungin study (1978) this goal also received neutral and negative responses. Any number of reasons could explain the lack of interest in research. Research should be an integral part of education, but often there is a gap between research and practice because research is generally done in the isolation of a laboratory or university away from the real setting and reported in journals using terms and statistics that are unfamiliar to the practitioner. If research could be integrated into the

classroom with greater participation from practitioners, teachers and administrators would more easily see its value. In order to change the attitudes about research, the need must be demonstrated and the mastery of the skills must be obtainable.

Summary

The consensus of the administrators was that the competencies are needed and are relevant to the various teaching situations. With the development of an assessment instrument to measure the competencies, they can become an integral part of the pre- and inservice preparation of teachers.

Reference

Holman, I.J., Competency for Teachers of the Visually Handicapped as Perceived by Administrators. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1983.

Issues and Problems in the Assessment of Competencies

Geraldine T. Scholl
University of Michigan

Introduction

In the competency movement, assessing the attainment of a specific competency of a teacher has presented a significant stumbling block. Assessment has likewise been a continuing challenge in this project.

In this paper we will examine some of the issues and problems in assessment of competencies, describe the procedures we used to identify appropriate achievement indicators/mastery tasks, and present a description of our current efforts in this area.

Problems and Issues

There are at least three major problem areas related to

assessment: the degree of specificity required for appropriate assessment; the need for objective and reliable measures for assessment; and identification and assessment of the affective component. In discussing each, we will describe some of our attempts to resolve these problem areas.

Degree of Detail

Early in the competency movement in general teacher education there was a trend toward identifying minute and detailed observable behaviors that would seem to indicate the achievement of a particular competency. The result was the fragmentation which has been criticized in the CBTE movement (Broudy, 1972).

We experimented with procedures for assessing specific behaviors as well. We developed a rating system with very specific behaviors for one of the competencies: "Teacher will demonstrate the ability to assess visually handicapped learners using a variety of informal and formal procedures."

We used a six point rating scale ranging from:

1. indicates that a complete training cycle is necessary;

to:

6. indicates that the person qualifies to train or supervise volunteers or paraprofessionals.

This rating scale was used to rate pre- and post training on the competency. The specific behaviors rated were in the nonverbal and verbal areas and in the evaluation of the written report. For example, fifteen behaviors in ten categories were listed for the assessment of non-verbal behaviors for this competency. Each item was to be rated on the six-point scale. To illustrate: the section under "Introduction to Session" included these items:

1. Physical Environment
   a. Provides quiet atmosphere
   b. Prepares materials
   c. Arranges materials appropriately.

The items were detailed, specific and included objective criteria for observing a specific behavior. In actuality, they were too detailed, would take considerable time to evaluate, may not be observable in all situations; and the major purpose of the observation could become lost in the maze of details. Finally, assessing all 70

competencies for the ten goal areas in this detailed manner would result in a loss of the total gestalt.

It was evident that we needed to move in a more global direction.

Reliability and Objectivity

A more global assessment likewise has its pitfalls. Unless an observation is directed toward a specific behavior, it can be very subjective and biased according to the frame of reference of the observer. Two raters observing the same classroom situation require more or less extensive training on criteria to be used for assessment in order to reach a consensus on their ratings.

Recently we reviewed the ratings of our student teachers at mid-term. We obtain ratings from the cooperating teacher, the university supervisor and the student him/herself. The rating form provides for five categories, the highest of which is:

> As competent as an excellent experienced inservice teacher.

This category was designed to provide a ceiling as high as possible in the event a student was truly outstanding. We found most of our students were rated by the cooperating teacher in this category. The students themselves tended to be less glowing, however, and rated themselves:

> As competent as is usually expected of a student teacher.

The university supervisor, a doctoral student, tended to rate the student somewhere in between.

It is difficult to develop a rating scale that has rater reliability without becoming too detailed. Ratings from both an observer and the person him/herself sometimes helps to overcome this disadvantage.

Assessing the Affective Component

In a previous paper we examined the affective component of the skill areas accompanying the competencies included within the current document (Scholl, et al, 1982). We found that ten of the 70 competencies have an affective component and these ten competencies have a total of fifteen skills. Of the ten, seven relate to the learner, two to the setting

and one to the teacher him/herself:

1.1 Knowledge of how development can be affected by a visual impairment.
2.2 Knowledge of formal and informal assessment procedures appropriate for visually handicapped, in language, affective, sensory, motor and perceptual/cognitive areas.
3.4 Knowledge of social and independent living skills necessary for visually handicapped learners.
3.12 Knowledge of play skills necessary for visually handicapped learners to maximize their intellectual, emotional, social and physical development.
7.6 Knowledge of the need for visually handicapped learners to develop positive self-concepts.
7.9 Knowledge of value of peer relationship for visually handicapped learners with non-handicapped learners.
7.10 Knowledge of the effect of visual handicaps on family relationships.
10.2 Knowledge of attitudes and value systems in various areas and cultures.
10.3 Knowledge of attitudes and value systems related to the visually handicapped.
10.4 Knowledge of one's own professional strengths, weaknesses, values, and attitudes.

As a result of this review, competencies have been added in these areas: the affective component in the classroom setting; teaching of social skills; developing social consciousness; helping families enhance affective development; training in assertiveness skills; group dynamics; and advocacy.

The mastery tasks for these skill areas focus primarily on cognitive aspects. We have not resolved the problem of identifying appropriate mastery tasks/achievement indicators for these areas which are deemed critical to the effective functioning of our students in training and our teachers in the field but which by their nature are difficult to assess through objective criteria.

In summary, we recognize weaknesses in the current document and are aware of the above issues and problems. We have attempted to arrive at solutions but have not succeeded to as great an extent as we would like.

Procedures Used for Identification of Mastery Tasks/Achievement Indicators

Over the past few years we have been working on the identification of mastery tasks/achievement indicators for the competencies. Our procedures have not been wholly scientific but we have sought input from a variety of sources.

Since the beginning of this project, we have used the competency document in our teacher preparation program. We have solicited input related to the mastery tasks from our students over the past several years. We ask the students to describe how they would demonstrate to a prospective employer that they had attained a particular competency. Their responses have given us many interesting suggestions and creative ideas. Additionally, it has provided a good exercise for them since they had to think through responses to possible questions from prospective employers in the 'real' world.

During one summer the four cooperating teachers and their supervisor in one district where we place student teachers reviewed the document and added their suggestions.

During an inservice session with teachers in Michigan and another in Louisiana we gathered data from practicing teachers. We asked them to rate the importance of the goals and competencies and to suggest procedures for assessment using the same method as that described above which we used with our students. Again, we received many practical ideas.

We have had several sessions with other leadership personnel. At the CEC convention in 1979, about 25 teachers, administrators, doctoral students and university faculty members reviewed and reacted to the early document. Results from this session were used as a basis for a workshop with 17 university faculty members and doctoral students from 12 different universities in the fall of 1979. During this session the goal statements were collapsed from 12 to 10 and mastery tasks were greatly expanded.

Thus, although we did not use a formal procedure for collecting input, we have received suggestions from a variety of sources in the field. These suggestions have been invaluable for us and their input will be reflected in the latest edition of the document.

Content and Format for the Proposed Document

In deciding on a format, we reviewed several models and selected the self-study model which was used in a competency project for teachers of young children (Kasindorf, 1979). This model was adaptable for self-ratings but could also be used for ratings from another person, such as a supervisor for the inservice teacher or the cooperating teacher for the student teacher.

For each goal area there will be a summary of the entry level skills expected. This is a narrative description of the competencies, including knowledge and skill, that the teacher must have prior to attempting to acquire the competencies listed for that goal area. This section will be followed by a description of the components in each knowledge area and its accompanying skills. A check list format will detail the mastery tasks/achievement indicators for each specific knowledge area and its skills. This check list will be used by the person him/herself for rating. In addition, there will be a check list for ratings by another person, such as, a supervisor or supervising teacher.

Summary

This project has not been easy to implement. Unfortunately, there are many intangibles which make it difficult. It is our hope that it will be of value to teacher education programs as they review the competencies of their students in training and to administrators as they assess and evaluate their teachers. Finally, as teachers are requested to identify areas for professional development, we hope that the document will help them assess themselves and decide in which areas of competence they are deficient so that they may seek on their own or from their supervisors training in the areas of deficiency.

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Use of the Competencies to Improve Preservice Education

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Introduction

The purpose of this discussion is to present a reaction to the preceding papers on competencies for teachers of visually handicapped from the perspective of a preservice educator. Preservice education covers undergraduate as well as graduate programs that students complete to obtain initial teacher certification in education of the visually handicapped. Most students in preservice programs will have previously completed or be working simultaneously on their regular elementary or secondary education certification.

The first section responds to the issues and problems identified in the preceding papers and the second section describes attempts to use the teacher competencies as elements of the graduate teacher preparation program at Ohio State. It is interesting to note that in preparing this paper prior to reading the two previous papers, the competencies chosen for illustration were two which received mixed responses from administrators or received less than a substantial number of ratings in the "strongly agree" and "agree" categories.

Issues and Problems

As noted previously, several factors challenge the skills of those in teacher preparation programs who wish to use the ten competencies for teachers of visually handicapped to improve preservice education. First, there is the problem of identifying and defining competencies and

then agreeing on which are essential (necessary and sufficient) for teachers of visually handicapped children and youth. For preservice educators a related problem is the determination of which competencies can preservice preparation programs realistically expect students to master during the course of their year or possibly two of concentrated work. In other words, what should entry-level teachers be expected to know and be able to do? Should expectations for them be significantly different from experienced teachers? If so, in what areas and to what degree? If not, how many years should preservice programs 'hang on' to students.

A second factor affecting the successful implementation of competency-based teacher education programs was identified earlier, namely, the lack of measurable criteria for assessing mastery of the competencies. What behaviors, products, performances, attitudes are evidence of mastery and under what conditions should they be produced: in a micro-teaching lab? on a timed test? during the student teaching experience with the cooperating teacher present? while being video-taped?

Closely tied to the problem of criteria for determining mastery is the degree of specificity necessary for evaluators to recognize behaviors that should permit the conclusion that a student has achieved mastery. For example, Goal 9.1 in the area of research calls for "knowledge of general theories, concepts, and techniques in research." A skill leading to mastery of that goal is to "evaluate and report accurately on existing research studies." The competency document suggests three mastery tasks for satisfactory demonstration of that skill, the first of which is: "Describe appropriate procedures for obtaining, analyzing, and describing sample selection and data from single-subject and small-N samples." We could generate a multitude of subtasks, each with criteria, that would be elements of this one suggested mastery task. But while immersed in the details of how to analyze data from small-N smaple studies, we would still need to keep in mind the overall goal of "knowledge of and need for research with visually handicapped learners." Maintaining orientation to the 'big picture' while focusing on one aspect in some ways reminds one of the demands made upon a pupil with low vision who is reading an assignment in 10-point print with a high-power hand-held magnifier.

Also tied to the problem of choosing criteria for determining mastery of competencies at the preservice level is the necessity for objective and reliable assessment of

performance. As has been mentioned, in one study of student teacher evaluation, raters of a student's classroom performance displayed consistent differences in their ratings even when provided with a five-point rating scale.

The affective component, the last major area of difficulty mentioned in the previous discussion, presents a real concern to preservice educators who are attempting to prepare their students for effective work with parents of visually handicapped children, colleagues in regular education, and administrators who have had little training in or experience with low incidence programs. The affective component was identified in only 10 of the 70 competencies; yet it seems inherent in many of the tasks teachers must do, including those involving skills in establishing professional relationships and working in collaboration with others whose training and expertise may be different either in perspective or in theoretical underpinnings from those of the teacher. We probably all can name at least one teacher who could be viewed as competent in producing school learning in children but whose interpersonal skills decreased the probability of that teacher's success as a consulting, itinerant, or resource room teacher. Since most of the teaching positions available in this country involve consulting and cooperative planning with other professionals, and not just skills associated with the traditional role, our teacher may not be successful in meeting the demands of the positions open in the school districts, intermediate units, cooperatives, or counties today. The question facing preservice educators is how to identify, teach, measure, and evaluate affective behavior. Is it something that in fact can be taught?

In spite of these five factors that challenge preservice teacher preparation personnel, work does go on. We cannot sit and quiver while the rest of the world rotates. The ten goals with their seventy competency statements and numerous mastery tasks are being used by preservice programs in a variety of ways that include but are not limited to:

a. using the goals as a framework for program design

b. comparing the existing preparation program content to that suggested by the competencies to uncover any areas that are not built into the program

c. setting the competencies up as goals for students to reach in the course of time

d. selecting and incorporating a goal and related mastery tasks into program, course, or practicum requirements

e. using the goals in some combination of the ways listed above.

Two Competencies Used at the Preservice Level

Let us look briefly at Goals 8 and 9 and how they can be used in a preservice preparation program.

Goal 8: Teacher will demonstrate ability to utilize local, state and national legislation, policy, and resources to assist in the delivery of services to the visually handicapped learner.

In order to help assure efficient performance in the job setting, teachers of visually handicapped must know about and be able to work with national, state, and local resources to acquire information, draw upon support services, and obtain educational materials for students as well as for parents and, frequently, for professional colleagues. To develop skills in using local, state, and national resources, students are required, as part of their student teaching seminar, to select an agency delivering services to visually handicapped children and youth and then analyze that agency to determine:

a. types of services available, both direct and indirect

b. financial basis of the agency
   1. sources of income: voluntary contributions, state aid, funds from parent organizations, fees, endowments, contract arrangements

   2. types of disbursements: direct payment to client, subcontracts

c. referral sources

d. eligibility requirements for receiving service
   1. procedures
   2. forms

e. evidence of agency involvement in political activity at local, state, or national level

f. evidence of interagency cooperation in the community.

This last element of the analysis is quite important since, particularly in low incidence areas, coordination of services is vital. If there are already channels of communication open among agencies, teachers need to know about them and how to tap into them.

To complete the task for Goal 8, students receive a copy of the rationale for the task, an outline of what their agency analysis should include, and an Evaluation Form which the student and the faculty member can use to review the student's report. The underlying assumption is that a procedure to locate resources in one community can be used in other communities. If students learn the process, they should be able to use or adapt it to other settings.

Goal 9 is rather broad.

Goal 9: Teacher will demonstrate knowledge of and need for research with visually handicapped learners.

9.1 Knowledge of general theories, concepts, and techniques in research

9.2 Knowledge of teacher's role in utilizing research in education of visually handicapped learners

9.3 Knowledge of ethical concerns, current regulations, and professional responsibilities regarding research with human subjects

9.4 Knowledge of research needs in instruction, technology, and other areas relevant to the education of visually handicapped learners

9.5 Knowledge necessary to design and disseminate research findings with visually handicapped learners.

In our graduate program we have requirements for students in the areas of applied behavior analysis, use of single-subject research design in practicum settings, and knowledge of general theories, concepts, and techniques of research. One of the goals to which these requirements lead

is for students to be good consumers of research. To achieve this goal, we have a mastery task tied to Goal 9.1.3 which requires students to "evaluate critically and report accurately on existing research studies." As a step toward this goal, students select and review three research studies done with visually handicapped students or related to the field to illustrate each of the three major types of research: historical, descriptive, and experimental. Each review is to include the purpose of the study, a description of the sample selection process if applicable, procedures, method of data analysis, major findings and conclusions, weaknesses of the study and/or design, and suggestions for further research. These reviews are discussed in class and the critical features that characterize the studies as historical, descriptive, or experimental are identified. In the past some students have had difficulty recognizing distinctions, even after completing their outside research courses.

Conclusion

It is evident from these brief descriptions of two mastery tasks for Goals 8 and 9 that there is room for the problems of criteria for mastery, level of specificity, and elements of subjectivity and bias to infiltrate. John Gardner, former Secretary of HEW, is quoted as having said "We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as insoluble problems." We in preservice teacher preparation, while well aware of the problems involved, still try to think in terms of opportunities. When all else fails, we look to inservice education to correct any errors of commission and omission!

Use of the Competencies to Plan Inservice Programs

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Background

Teachers of the visually handicapped are indeed fortunate to have a carefully researched and defined set of nationally accepted professional competencies available to them. Indeed, teachers should and many times have found the

competencies to be an invaluable tool to have at their disposal in defending their professional viability. Teachers and administrators working in programs serving visually handicapped students should have the competencies as a continual point of reference in order to alert themselves to the everchanging dynamics of their programs. The changing demands of students' curricular needs, the "rusting" of teachers' own previously acquired skills, the changing expectations of supervisors, parents and students, together with the natural increase of specialized knowledge and resources in the field all demand that there be some yardstick on which the necessity for change can be measured. Additionally, the recent phenomenon of decliningg student enrollment has forced new dimensions of change upon teachers of the visually handicapped.

It is universally recognized in any field of endeavor that there must be mechanisms for renewal and growth if individuals are to remain productive and satisfied in their chosen vocations. In the field of education, "staff development" or "inservice training" has become the watchword and requirement of the laws in meeting the natural needs of such renewal and growth. For teachers serving a low incidence handicapping condition, such as vision, the task of providing well designed inservice training is constrained by several real factors. Much inservice training is viewed by administrators to be an expensive "down-time" for teachers with the consequent need for costly substitute coverage. In response to the requirements of Public Law 94-142, many public school districts have fallen into a rather perfunctory and nonspecific menu of training focusing on procedural aspects of special education but lacking in any pertinent programmatic content. In the majority of this country, enormously diverse inservice needs are spread across too wide a geographic area. Understandably, general administrators are unaware of the very specialized needs of teachers of the visually handicapped and many times are reluctant to accept teacher-designed and run inservice programs. Finally, in states confronted with new tax reform legislation and consequent budgetary constraints, increasing numbers of teachers are being hired on a part-time/hourly basis which tends to diminish opportunities and access for teachers to well-developed and pertinent inservice training.

How then can these very real constraints be removed, or at least minimized through the use of the teacher competencies? First, let us consider the advantages of employing competency statements in designing and delivering inservice training for teachers of the visually handicapped.

The competencies have become accepted as creditable by teachers as a result of the use of the competencies in current teacher training programs and competencies as a form are widely accepted by administrators particularly as they apply to teacher evaluation procedures. The competencies are attractie to teachers as they are specific to the profession of teaching visually handicapped students. Additionally, they are comprehensive, well-ordered and are consistent units of expression for teachers and administrators to determine patterns of inservice need and then to use in measuring consequent outcomes of staff development experiences. The competencies outline current best practices in meeting the needs of visually handicapped students, a particularly important point in measuring the needs of a very tenured staff.

Next, let us look at the actual use of the competencies in designing inservice training.

Illustration of Use of the Competencies

We have an emerging inservice model in Massachusetts which we hope is sensitive to the previously mentioned positive aspects of the teacher competencies and at the same time takes into consideration the very real constraints that frustrate all of us in providing inservice to a low incidence professional group. There are three basic components in the Massachusetts model:

1. A teacher based needs assessment utilizing the teacher competencies for education of the visually handicapped

2. An active, regionalized teacher communication network

3. A state supported mechanism for the disbursement of monies for locally designed inservice training.

Specifically, the inservice meeds assessment works this way. In Massachusetts, teachers of the visually handicapped are able to utilize a portion of the State Department of Education's program assessment instrument which has been specifically designed for programs serving visually handicapped students (Stager, 1981). The most extensive section of the program assessment questionnaire deals with the nature of the teacher's technical assistance to the student and his regular classroom teacher(s). The framework for this section is based on the 105 teacher competencies spread across 12 broad goal areas that were

abstracted from the American Foundation for the Blind Field Test Edition of Competency Based Curriculum for Teachers of the Visually Handicapped (For a complete listing of the competencies, see Spungin, 1977). For each specific competency, the teacher is asked to indicate whether that competency has or has not been acquired through formal professional preparation or inservice experience. (See Example 1).

Example 1

DEVELOPMENTAL PATTERNS IN VISUALLY HANDICAPPED LEARNERS

SKILL	ACQUIRED	NOT ACQUIRED	PRACTICE/NEED REGULARLY	OFTEN	SELDOM	NEVER	COMPETENCY UPDATE NEEDED
"I Can:"							
1. Analyze the relationship between etiology of visual loss and their effects on development.	X						

If the teacher judges that the competency has been acquired, the teacher goes on to indicate the general frequency with which s/he practices it. (See Example 2)

Example 2

SKILL	ACQUIRED	NOT ACQUIRED	(PRACTICE)/NEED REGULARLY	OFTEN	SELDOM	NEVER	COMPETENCY UPDATE NEEDED
"I Can:"							
1. Analyze the relationship between etiology of visual loss and their effects on development	X			X			

If the competency has not been acquired, the teacher indicates the general frequency with which he needs it to meet effectively the needs of the students in the program and hence a need for inservice training is indicated. (See Example 3).

Example 3

SKILL	ACQUIRED	NOT ACQUIRED	PRACTICE/NEED REGULARLY	OFTEN	SELDOM	NEVER	COMPETENCY UPDATE NEEDED
" I Can:"							
1. Analyze the relationship between etiology of visual loss and their effects on development		X	X				

In some cases the teacher may judge that while a particular competency has been acquired, there is a need to "update" that competency through some means of inservice training. (See Example 4).

Example 4

SKILL	ACQUIRED	NOT ACQUIRED	PRACTICE/NEED REGULARLY	OFTEN	SELDOM	NEVER	COMPETENCY UPDATE NEEDED
" I Can:"							
1. Analyze the relationship between etiology of visual loss and their effects on development.	X			X			X

Through an inspection of the teacher responses across

all 105 competencies, interesting patterns present themselves in terms of particular teacher inservice needs, particular areas where teacher expertise is underused and particular areas where typical or unusually strong technical assistance is rendered by the teacher.

When such responses for inservice are tallied with those of other teachers of visually handicapped, either in regional groupings or on a state-wide basis, broad patterns of need may emerge as possible bases for inservice program development.

In Massachusetts, the eighty-five teachers of the visually handicapped are divided into regional groupings called "Inservice/Talk Groups" with a Teacher Team Leader identified for each group. Through the coordination of this Team Leader, input received through the needs assessment process is then translated into teacher designed inservice funding applications and forwarded to the State Department of Education for review and approval.

Summary

The competencies of teachers of the visually handicapped have served the state of Massachusetts in multiple ways. Through the application of the competencies in preservice university training, local program evaluation procedures and finally through ongoing inservice needs assessment strategies, there is a common reference point which is based squarely on the needs of visually handicapped students.

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